

# The Inner Logic of Israel's Negotiations: Withdrawal Process, Not Peace Process

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Hamm (anguished): What's happening, what's happening?

Clov: Something is taking its course.

- Samuel Beckett, Endgame

Israeli officials say they are relinquishing the West Bank and Gaza as part of a peace process in which Yasir Arafat and the Palestinians must fulfill their side of their bargain. Israeli forces, however, withdraw from one area after another despite the Arab side's failure to live up their promises. Why does the Israeli government ignore Arafat's transgressions? Is there a logic behind this perplexing policy of overlooking broken promises?

There is, and it is the logic of unilateral withdrawal. Though public pronouncements of Israeli officials emphasize peace and mutuality, unilateralism actually drives Israeli actions. The inconsistency between declared and actual policy has important implications for both the Arab-Israeli conflict and for Israel.

## "LAND FOR PEACE" AND ITS FAILURE

Since the Six-Day War of June 1967, the Labor Party has favored withdrawal from territories Israel won in that war,<sup>1</sup> hoping to free Israel from governing a large and hostile Arab population. Labor leaders intended to trade the land for peace with Arab interlocutors who had authority and credibility, such as Anwar as-Sadat of Egypt (though he reached his agreement with a Likud, not Labor, government). This land-for-peace policy envisioned Israel's peace partners' establishing a formal and reliable peace before Israel would take the risk of territorial withdrawal.

The determination not to relinquish territory before the securing of a formal peace was rooted in Israel's unhappy history of returning the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt in 1957, under U.S. pressure following the Suez War only to watch ten years later as the Egyptians used the same territory to launch a war against Israel. The principle that Israeli territorial concessions should follow, not precede, a formal peace not only became Labor policy but was protected in U.N. Security Council Resolution 242.

Labor, however, could not enlist a suitable partner for a land-for-peace deal. For many years, its leaders invested hope in the Jordanian option -- desiring King Husayn of Jordan to take responsibility for the West Bank and Gaza -- but he failed to play the role they assigned him. In the absence of a partner, Labor leaders did not advocate territorial withdrawal, much less did they consider negotiating peace with the PLO. In 1979, Rabin explained his outlook:

Although Labor and the Likud differ in their views on the solution to the Palestinian question, we both oppose in the strongest terms the creation of a Palestinian "mini-state" in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, first and foremost because it cannot solve anything. . . . The leaders of the PLO have declared -- and I believe them -- that they view such a "mini-state" as but the first phase in the achievement of their so-called secular, democratic Palestine, to be built on the ruins of the State of Israel.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres explained in 1980 why "the option of opening negotiations with the PLO does not really exist." He noted that the PLO comprises "a number of separate armed factions," is not democratic, and lacks "the authority of disciplined leadership."

The Covenant of the PLO calls for return of the entire land of Palestine ... to Arab domination. Interlocutors who claim that Arafat may be satisfied with a less ambitious goal, namely that Israel withdraw to the pre-June 1967 borders, that it abandon East Jerusalem, and concede the establishment of a Palestinian army, may not realize that they sponsor a scheme that would prejudice Israel's capacity for self-defense and would leave it without defensible borders.

A PLO state on the West Bank could never settle the problem of the Palestinian refugees. The open space of Jordan could. A PLO state would prolong, not end warfare; it would build a base for the continuation of the struggle, not work for reconciliation.<sup>3</sup>

During the era of Likud ascendancy, 1977-92, Labor Party leaders contended that Israel could achieve peace if it offered a territorial compromise. The intifada, which began in December 1987, spurred Labor leaders to press their case for withdrawal with urgency. The principal impediment to peace, they argued, was no longer Arab adherence to anti-Zionism or the undemocratic and violent nature of Arab politics but rather Likud's unwillingness to trade territory.

In the 1992 election campaign, Labor pledged to make peace, but not to negotiate with the PLO or permit creation of a new Palestinian state. So confident was Labor of its analysis that Rabin promised his government would conclude a satisfactory deal with the Palestinian Arabs, but explicitly not the PLO, within six months. Labor did win the elections and immediately announced a willingness to trade land for peace, in line with the Labor Party's longstanding policies. But it failed to achieve a deal, not within six months and not within a year. By the late spring of 1993, various officials (Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin especially) voiced amazement and frustration at their inability to reach peace agreements.

This failure suggested that Land for Peace -- with its pledges of no negotiations with the PLO and no Palestinian Arab state and its requirement of peace first, withdrawal later -- could not work at the diplomatic table. Labor leaders had to admit to themselves that the key to peace lay not simply in Israel's willingness to trade territory. Were they to honor their election promises and retain Labor's longstanding policy, their diplomacy would achieve nothing. Having already missed his self-imposed six-month deadline for a land-for-peace deal, Rabin faced the distressing prospect of his government's going through its four-year term with no peace agreement and with the territories still under Israel's control. Not only would the opposition then exploit Labor's embarrassment at the polls, but if Likud regained power, it would strengthen Israel's hold on the territories so as to preclude, for all practical purposes and forever, an Israeli withdrawal.

In other words, the experience of 1992-93 compelled the Rabin government to confront the dilemma inherent in its land-for-peace policy: without a credible and authoritative Arab negotiator offering Israel peace and security, Israel would have to keep the territories.

## **ACCEPTING THE LOGIC OF UNILATERAL Withdrawal**

For decades, the case for Israeli withdrawal relied heavily on a demographic argument. If Israel held on to the West Bank and Gaza, proponents of territorial concession insisted, Israel would either cease to be Jewish or cease to be democratic. If Israel could not achieve a land-for-peace deal, this view implied, it would have to withdraw unilaterally from the territories. Those who, like Rabin, believed that a peace deal was available could accept the demographic bomb argument without grappling with its implication of unilateral withdrawal. But when his land-for-peace diplomacy floundered in the summer of 1993, Rabin bowed to the logic of unilateral withdrawal. He concluded that the traditional land-for-peace approach would doom Israel to maintain control of the territories. Seeing that he could not insist on a secure peace while bringing the occupation to a prompt end, Rabin decided, fatefully, that the latter took priority.

This was an historic and radical departure. Labor's slogan for decades, after all, was Land for Peace, not Unilateral Withdrawal, not Land for Nothing, and not Land for Your Assuming Our Burden. This new logic meant accepting Beilin's characterization of the territories as "a burden and a curse." It meant abandoning the demand for a credible, nonterrorist Palestinian Arab negotiating partner. It meant initiating withdrawal before a peace settlement. And it meant leaving open the possibility that the final settlement would lead to the creation of a Palestinian state.

## **EMBRACING THE PLO**

The government could not implement its policy of unilateral withdrawal unilaterally. It required an Arab partner to take responsibility for whatever Israel relinquished. And it wanted the Israeli public to view the withdrawals as part of a peace arrangement.

If Israel were to begin its withdrawals quickly, the government could no longer wait for new, moderate Palestinian Arab leaders to emerge. The delegation at the talks in Washington could not become the required partner, lacking as it did an independent political base. Israeli officials had to make do with the political leaders such as they were. Rabin explained:

For a long time, I believed that a Palestinian force would possibly be able to arise among the residents of the territories and develop its own capabilities. [However] after more than a year of negotiating, I reached the conclusion that they are unable to do so. They did not come to Madrid without a decision from Tunis [i.e., the PLO headquarters]. They did not do anything without faxes and phone calls from Tunis. It's not pleasant, but it's a fact. Those who prefer to ignore the facts may do so. But those who wish to advance peace and find a solution, cannot.<sup>4</sup>

Rabin effectively adopted the approach of the 1960s pop song: "If you can't be with the one you love, love the one you're with." He embraced the PLO not because its leaders had undergone a change of heart<sup>5</sup> but because the PLO could give the appearance of mutuality to a process that would, if necessary, remain fundamentally one-sided.

In defending this new policy, the Rabin government argued that it faced a choice between the "moderate" PLO and the "extremist" fundamentalist Islamic groups, such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Never in the past had Labor Party leaders contended that such a choice was meaningful, much less necessary; instead, they had applied the term "moderate" only to Palestinian Arabs who were not active or open PLO supporters, those who were pro-Hashemite or not very political, a substantial though largely unorganized population. They applied the term "extremist" to those groups -- Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the PLO and its many factions --

committed to Israel's destruction.

Once the PLO by default became Israel's interlocutor, however, a redefinition was required. Rabin pushed the old moderates aside; and found that the great divide distinguished one group of the old "extremists" and another anti-terrorist Palestinian Arabs who had rejected the PLO were told, in effect, that their time was up. Jerusalem had exhausted its patience with them and their inability to compete politically with the PLO. Israeli policy now grouped them together with their PLO opponents, subordinating the former to the latter. Now that Arafat was a "moderate," the old moderates lost their distinguishing label and thus their political identity. Such are the wages of ineffectual decency.

(Ironically, Israel adopted the strategy of playing the PLO off against Hamas just as the Clinton administration repudiated such tactics elsewhere in the Middle East. The administration's "Dual Containment" doctrine holds that, as Iran and Iraq are both untrustworthy and hostile, the United States should not try to build one up against the other, but should seek to "contain" both. No one seemed to apply this analysis to the PLO and Hamas, however.)

The Rabin government's asking for very little from the PLO made possible the Declaration of Principles (DoP) that was signed at a gala White House ceremony in September 1993. The DoP addresses peace in just two places, and then only vaguely and perfunctorily: in a brief preambular paragraph and in a reference to Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.<sup>6</sup> Instead, the DoP goes into detail on two other subjects, Israeli withdrawal (Israel's "transfer of powers and responsibilities," "redeployment of Israeli forces," "Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and Jericho Area") and the establishment of proto-sovereign Arab institutions (elections, the legislative council, police force, authorities responsible for electricity, the Gaza Sea Port, economic development, export promotion, the environment, land and water).

The Arab side does not promise much to Israel other than readiness to receive what Israel gives. The DoP itself contains no explicit recognition of Israel's right to exist or to live in peace and no renunciation of terrorism or other violence. Arafat did, after two more weeks of hard bargaining, give side-letter pledges for peace and nonviolence; but Israeli leaders initially accepted the DoP as a free-standing agreement without such pledges, showing that they were willing to withdraw from the territories even without them.

Indeed, Israeli officials took pains to affirm their intention to begin withdrawals in any event. Before the side-letter agreement was reached, Peres said Israel was ready to sign the DoP immediately and unconditionally.<sup>7</sup> In the nearly two weeks required to negotiate the exchange of letters that effected mutual recognition, Israeli officials were continually asked whether implementation of the DoP hinged in any way on PLO peace pledges. Time and again, Peres responded that the DoP is "independent," "stands on its own two feet," and "doesn't need any further confirmation."<sup>8</sup> That brief period of intense diplomacy exposed most clearly the unilateral nature of the Oslo process: the Israelis intended to withdraw whether or not the PLO made promises about peace or fulfilled them.

Why, then, did Arafat make the peace and nonviolence pledges? To win formal Israeli recognition. When a newspaper first published a text of the DoP agreement in late August 1993, the Arab party was identified not as the PLO but as "the Palestinian team representing the Palestinian people."<sup>9</sup> This labored locution implied that the Rabin government would deal with Arafat, even hand over land and authority to him, but not expressly legitimate the PLO. Formal Israeli recognition was not required for handing over power and therefore, from Israel's point of view, was not required in the DoP. Any such recognition would be intensely controversial in Israel, so, if granted, would have to be packaged with care. When Yasir Arafat insisted on Israeli recognition,

Peres listed his conditions:

The PLO has a covenant made of 33 items. The majority of them call directly or indirectly for the destruction of Israel. We expect the PLO to issue a general commitment that all these items . . . which call for the destruction of Israel will become invalid.

Secondly, the PLO never announced clearly that it is ready to denounce terror and violence as a means to achieve political goals. We expect the PLO to denounce terror right away and to declare that in future disputes the way to settle them will be political and peaceful.

Thirdly, we expect the PLO to recognize clearly and loudly the right of Israel to exist in peace and security.

Finally, we expect the PLO plenum to say they accept [U.N. Resolutions] 242 and 338 as the basis of negotiations.

In other words, the concessions asked of the PLO were not conditions for Israeli withdrawal from the territories, as is commonly believed, but for Israeli recognition of the PLO. In a letter to Rabin dated September 9, 1993, Arafat set forth the PLO commitments that Israel demanded as the price of recognition. Regarding terrorism, he stated that "the PLO renounces the use of terrorism and other acts of violence and will assume responsibility over all PLO elements and personnel in order to assure their compliance, prevent violations and discipline violators." As for the Palestinian Covenant, he declared that

The PLO affirms that those articles of the Palestinian Covenant which deny Israel's right to exist, and the provisions of the Covenant which are inconsistent with the commitments of this letter are now inoperative and no longer valid. Consequently, the PLO undertakes to submit to the Palestinian National Council for formal approval the necessary changes in regard to the Palestinian Covenant.

The Israeli government enthusiastically welcomed this letter, and in response Rabin formally recognized the PLO as "the representative of the Palestinian people." He eventually also consented to "the P.L.O. team" as the term referring to the Arab party in the DoP text signed on September 13, 1993.

Israeli officials knew that their public would far more readily support these policies if they saw them as part of a bilateral peace rather than a unilateral withdrawal. Accordingly, as soon as Arafat and Rabin exchanged their letters, these officials stopped declaring that Israel's withdrawal commitments were "independent" and asserted instead that the DoP depended on fulfillment of the mutual recognition deal.

Arafat's pledges permitted the Israeli government to claim it was operating within the framework of traditional Labor policy. A few days before the mutual recognition deal, Peres had commented: "We cannot recognize the PLO as it is now. A PLO which renounces terrorism and cancels those clauses in its covenant which call on harming Israel will no longer be the PLO."<sup>10</sup> After the deal was completed, Peres asserted that the Israeli government had not changed its policy toward the PLO, but rather that "the PLO has changed completely."<sup>11</sup> Environment Minister Yossi Sarid even announced, "Today, we mark the day the PLO ceased being the PLO."<sup>12</sup> In the ceremony marking his signing of the letter recognizing the PLO, Rabin stated: "I see in this commitment on the part of the PLO a change -- a dramatic change -- that opens the road toward reconciliation and peace between the Palestinians and Israel. . . . I believe it starts a new era."<sup>13</sup>

Israeli officials declared their intention to insist rigorously on PLO compliance with Arafat's promises, but in

relying on Arafat's credibility, they knew they had created a credibility problem for themselves with the Israeli public. To minimize this, they repeatedly offered assurances that, were the PLO to violate its commitments, Jerusalem would halt the process, even turn it around. Beilin warned that Israel would refuse to "go on" if PLO leaders "cannot control their opposition and there is no order"; he also said that "a key part" of the DoP plan is "the fact that it is reversible."<sup>14</sup> Susan Hattis Rolef, the editor of a Labor Party publication, noted that "if things go wrong, the situation is reversible. . . . If one side fails to fulfill its obligations, the other side is released from its. Should things go wrong, it would take the IDF a few days to step in and reverse the situation."<sup>15</sup>

## **ATTORNEY FOR THE PLO**

Israeli government officials presumably hoped Arafat would keep his word. They also preferred to talk idealistically of peace rather than resignedly of having to withdraw from the West Bank and Gaza without a secure peace. At the same time, the record suggests that they never intended to let PLO violations stop, much less reverse, the process. Determined not to return to the land-for-peace trap, they had reordered their priorities and withdrawal now trumped peace.

Amending the covenant. The PLO did not keep its promises in the two areas Israeli officials identified as most significant -- amending the covenant and suppressing terrorism. Embarrassed by Arafat's evident indifference to the first obligation, Haim Ramon, the minister of health, told the Knesset in early November 1993 that Arafat promised to convene the Palestine National Council for this purpose "during 1994."<sup>16</sup> More than two years later, the PLO still had not amended its covenant. Indeed, Arafat had not even raised this matter to the PNC. Israeli officials took this lack of action in stride, despite the historic importance they originally attributed to this promise as the indispensable sign of the PLO's transformation from a terrorist organization into a peace partner. And Arafat, like the man who twice sells the same horse to the same buyer, again promised to modify the covenant in the September 1995 agreement known as Oslo II.

Someday Arafat may perform the task. In any event, this episode illuminated Israeli policy, clarifying that the PLO does not need to heed Israeli warnings about rigorous enforcement of the Oslo accords. Israeli officials call the Oslo process a peace process -- meaning a two-sided affair in which Israel is not simply getting out of the territories but in return getting reliable Arab promises of peace and security -- but the Israeli government intends to carry the process forward regardless of whether the PLO fulfills its promises. Mutuality is not mandatory.

Suppressing terrorism. Jerusalem's response to Arafat's not keeping his second major commitment -- suppression of terrorism -- confirms this conclusion. More Israelis have been killed by terrorists since the famous Rabin-Arafat handshake than in any period of like duration in Israel's history. Several of the more spectacular terrorist outrages prompted short delays in diplomacy, but the government overall sought to insulate Arafat from this problem.

Early on, some officials took an independent line on PLO terrorism. In November 1993, Israel's Deputy Defense Minister Mordechai Gur accused Arafat of failing to order Fatah personnel to halt terrorism: "Arafat committed himself . . . to bring about an end to terrorism, it was the number one condition for the agreement, and for now, he is not fulfilling this condition." Gur explained: "Fatah's leadership is continuing to operate in the field." Police Minister Moshe Shahal joined Gur in denouncing PLO breaches of the no-terrorism pledge.<sup>17</sup> But that same month, Israel's Chief of Staff Ehud Barak reported that there had been no PLO terrorist attacks since the September 13 agreement. This became the standard line; Israeli officials, Rabin especially, have often

praised the PLO for honoring its promise to forswear terrorism.

How does the government square such praise by Barak, Rabin, and others with the accusations of Gur and Shahal, and with the many confirmed reports of terrorist activity by PLO elements? Through semantics: When asked to explain at least nine incidents in which PLO factions engaged in terror, just during the two months following "the handshake," the IDF spokesman replied: "The chief of staff was talking about PLO affiliates that have accepted the Declaration of Principles. . . . There have been no organized actions by factions of the PLO that have accepted the agreement signed with Israel."<sup>18</sup> Israeli officials, in other words, can say that the PLO has fulfilled its promise on terrorism because groups that commit terrorism are by definition not counted as PLO affiliates, for their actions show they have not accepted the DoP.

In defending the withdrawal process, Israeli officials not only do not insist on PLO compliance but function in effect as the PLO's defense attorneys. Asked at a meeting in Washington in 1994 about the Fatah Hawks's ongoing terrorist activity, an Israeli general on the General Staff replied, "The Fatah Hawks are not PLO." When reminded that they are not only PLO but part of Arafat's own faction, Fatah, the general replied with annoyance, "What do you want Arafat to do, tear up their membership cards?" In August 1995, after Arafat had exhorted his Arab audiences to jihad (sacred war) and called suicide bombers "martyrs and heroes," Peres dismissed this as rhetoric, "partly said to justify the past. . . . What counts is not the intentions of the Palestinians." Pressed by a journalist "Are you saying that it makes no difference whether Arafat genuinely wants peace or just wants to get as much as he can?" Peres replied, "Yes, I do believe it is irrelevant."<sup>19</sup>

The "peace process" is more accurately called the "withdrawal process." "Ending the occupation" and relinquishing responsibility are the key goals; peace is not. If peace develops, all to the good. If it does not, the process moves forward regardless. Israeli officials, to be sure, continue to negotiate and sign agreements with the PLO, to ascribe importance to their terms, and to demand that the PLO comply with the agreements. But their main concern is that enforcement of PLO pledges not interfere with the withdrawal. This applies to all PLO promises -- whether about amending the covenant, preventing or condemning terrorism, respecting the status quo in Jerusalem, abjuring belligerent rhetoric, or extraditing terrorist suspects. The government highlights the benefits of peace, but it intends to complete its withdrawal plans whether or not there is peace.

## **PEACE VS. DIVORCE**

When Israeli officials talk of separation rather than peace, they make it even clearer that the "peace process" is a unilateral Israeli withdrawal, not a two-sided bargain.

In late 1993, government officials promised that if the PLO could not prevent terrorism, Israel would halt or reverse its withdrawal from the territories. At the end of 1994, following several terrorist bombings in the heart of Israel, Rabin did not do this but established government committees to look into methods to separate Israel from the territories -- fences, walls, by-pass roadways, and the like. If the PLO could not prevent terrorism, Rabin made clear, Israel would withdraw anyway, while experimenting with new ways to divorce itself from the Arabs. Peace, of course, is different from divorce; indeed, in essential respects, divorce is the opposite of peace. Yet, Israeli officials switch back and forth between talk of conciliation and talk of constructing walls, as though it were all the same idea.<sup>20</sup>

It matters that the word "peace" is misapplied because treating the PLO as a partner in peace implies a different assessment of risks than does an essentially unilateral withdrawal premised on continued hostility and conflict. Withdrawals that may resolve the conflict require different analysis from those that simply change the

lines from which Israel will have to continue to fight against hostile neighbors. Though the government has been loath to advance them openly, serious arguments can be made for a unilateral Israeli withdrawal.<sup>21</sup> This unilateral withdrawal raises life-and-death issues for the Jewish state. They should be debated forthrightly. But they have not been, because the fanfares of peace diplomacy, like the gesticulations of a stage illusionist, have diverted the eye of the public from the real action.

## **"NO ALTERNATIVE"**

Having radically changed Israeli policy, the Rabin government aggressively defended its actions. When reminded of his 1992 campaign promises not to negotiate with the PLO or facilitate the creation of a Palestinian state, Rabin unapologetically replied that Israel had "no alternative,"<sup>22</sup> explaining: "We had to choose between the Greater Land of Israel, which means a bi-national state and whose populations would comprise, as of today, 4.5 million Jews and more than 3 million Palestinians . . . and a state smaller in area, but which would be a Jewish state. We chose to be a Jewish state."<sup>23</sup> Rabin implied Israel had only two choices, his negotiations with the PLO or annexation of the territories with citizenship for the Arab inhabitants (i.e., a binational state).

But no Israeli political party, certainly not Likud, proposed a binational state. None advocated annexation of the territories with citizenship for the Arab inhabitants. Government leaders distorted the picture to make those who opposed their dealings with the PLO appear fanatical and, of all things, un-Zionist.

Nor did Israel have to choose between Rabin's two options; it had at least one more. In the years between 1967 and 1993, Israel neither relinquished the territories nor annexed them -- neither embraced the PLO nor granted the Arab inhabitants citizenship. Rather, it controlled the territories pending agreement with an appropriate Arab party. That policy was compatible both with Labor's wish to trade the territory for peace and with Likud's wish to grant autonomy but not sovereignty to the Arabs there. Labeling those against handing over the territories to the PLO as enemies of peace and diluters of Israel's Jewish character showed just how swiftly and completely government officials had broken with the past. They thereby condemned not only Likud supporters, but also all those faithful to Labor's own 1992 election platform.

The resonant slogan that "Israel has no alternative to peace" deserves attention. "Peace" in its customary meaning requires two sides. Israel's having no alternative to peace implies Israel cannot survive without peace. This means Israel cannot survive without Arab consent, which means that, should Israel's neighbors withhold or revoke that consent, Israel will eventually cease to exist. Israelis who repeat this idealistic-sounding slogan probably do not intend to say this, but that is the logic of their words. The slogan signals to Israel's antagonists that they can, if steadfast, wear down the Jewish state; and if they draw this conclusion, the slogan of "no alternative" actually diminishes the chances for mutual accommodation. In short, Israel is less likely to win peace if its leaders proclaim that the country has no alternative to peace.

## **AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH?**

In debates about peace policies, Labor government supporters invariably ask their critics: If you oppose the present course, what, then, is your solution? But this challenge begs the question. Israel cannot have peace simply because its citizens desire it. Peace not being within Israelis' sole control, they cannot identify a solution irrespective of circumstances on the Arab side. Before peace is possible, Palestinian Arabs must develop both peaceable intentions and political institutions that have credibility and authority. If these factors are missing, peace with the Palestinian Arabs will not be available, no matter how forthcoming Israeli policy



might be. Israel cannot compel good faith on the Arab side, nor can it ensure mature political leadership there.

When these realities pressed themselves on the Rabin government in 1993, it unlinked withdrawal from peace. The Israelis controlled withdrawal but not peace. This remains the case. We know for sure that the "peace process" means withdrawals by Israel; we do not know for sure whether it will produce peace, or even whether both sides actually intend that it do so. In other words, we do not know whether it is actually a peace process.

After unlinking withdrawal from peace, the Israeli government proceeded to take whatever chances Israel has for peace and linked them to Arafat. Much now hinges on whether Arafat has the subjective good will and the objective authority to achieve and sustain a secure peace with Israel -- something his record provides ample grounds for doubting.

Relying on Arafat creates a problem for Israel, as illustrated by a riddle Abraham Lincoln liked to pose: If you call a dog's tail a leg, how many legs does a dog have? If the answer came back, "Five," Lincoln would say, "No, four, because calling a tail a leg doesn't make it a leg." Day after day, as PLO violations of the peace accords accumulate, it becomes increasingly evident that Arafat is not an authoritative and credible peace partner just because Israeli officials call him one.

<sup>1</sup> Henceforth, "the territories" mean the West Bank and Gaza.

<sup>2</sup> Yitzhak Rabin, *The Rabin Memoirs* (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown and Co., 1979), p. 334.

<sup>3</sup> Shimon Peres, "Strategy for Peace in the Middle East," *Foreign Affairs*, Spring 1980, pp. 894-95.

<sup>4</sup> Health Minister Haim Ramon explained: "You could say that PLO-Tunis [i.e., PLO headquarters] has finally come out of the closet. This is because we realized that the local Palestinian leaders were not able to sign anything." [JP, 8/30/93, p. 1] The next day, *The Jerusalem Post*, Aug. 31, 1993.

<sup>5</sup> Even after the first Israel-PLO deal was negotiated, Rabin still deemed Arafat neither authoritative nor credible. He publicly questioned Arafat's ability to muster the votes required to amend the Palestinian Covenant (*The Jerusalem Post*, Sept. 10, 1993), and he stated that "the State of Israel still opposes terrorism and violence, which is mainly practiced today by Islamic extremists like Hizbullah in Lebanon and Hamas, and other terror organizations including the PLO." *The Jerusalem Post*, Sept. 2, 1993.

<sup>6</sup> Resolution 338, adopted soon after the 1973 war, obliged the parties legally to negotiate a settlement in accordance with Resolution 242.

<sup>7</sup> *The Jerusalem Post*, September 2, 1993.

<sup>8</sup> *The Jerusalem Post*, Sept. 6, 1993; Sept. 1, 1993; and Cable News Network, reported in *The New York Times*, Sept. 2, 1993.

<sup>9</sup> *The New York Times*, Sept. 1, 1993.

<sup>10</sup> *The Jerusalem Post*, Sept. 1, 1993, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> *The Jerusalem Post*, Sept. 10, 1993., p. 1

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *The Jerusalem Post*, Sept. 12, 1993., p. 2

<sup>14</sup> *The Wall Street Journal*, Sept. 1, 1993., p. A10

<sup>15</sup> *The Jerusalem Post*, Sept. 29, 1993.

<sup>16</sup> *The Jerusalem Post*, Nov. 4, 1993., p. 14.

<sup>17</sup> The Jerusalem Post, Nov. 19, 1993. , p. 1A

<sup>18</sup> Brigadier-General Ilan Tal, The Jerusalem Post, Nov. 10, 1993, p. 8.

<sup>19</sup> The Jerusalem Post International Edition, Aug. 26, 1995, p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> Which brings to mind the Queen of Hearts. After Alice innocently asserts "one can't believe impossible things," the Queen replies: "I daresay you haven't had much practice. . . . When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day. Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast."

<sup>21</sup> I analyze these in "Land for No Peace," Commentary, June 1994, pp. 32, 35.

<sup>22</sup> In Hebrew, the phrase `ayn breira is a national byword to explain why Israelis defend themselves so bravely and well. Rabin inverted it to explain why the Israeli government could no longer fight but had to embrace the PLO.

<sup>23</sup> The Jerusalem Post International Edition, Oct. 14, 1995, p. 1.